



Suzanne Gelb Ph.D., J.D. All Grown Up

8 Simple Truths About Raising Happy, Successful Kids

Learned behaviors can be unlearned, but it has to start with you.

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Type “good parenting” into Google and 519,000 results pop up. Search for “parenting” in the books section of Amazon and—whoa—there are 1,979 new titles. And those are just the books released within the last 30 days! Clearly, when it comes to “effective parenting,” there’s a deluge of information out there. It’s no wonder that so many parents feel overwhelmed and confused about how to set rules, apply consequences, discipline kids without being too harsh or too lenient, and so on. While parenting is big, important work, though, it need not be a mysterious or complicated process.

Through my work as a psychologist, coach, and family law attorney, supporting families over the past 28 years, I found that raising awesome kids comes down to a small

collection of simple truths. To keep yourself, and your kids, on the right track, just remember and follow these 8 basic guidelines, most of which are pretty intuitive, and many of which you are probably already doing:

1. You are your child's primary role model.

Your child is naturally wired to look up to you, mimic you, and follow in your footsteps. Which means...

2. You cannot expect your child to behave in a way that you do not behave.

If you want your child to change his or her habits—say, spend less time on the computer, be more patient, or be more responsible and organized—make sure that you are modeling those behaviors first.

3. "Talking" to a child is rarely enough to create a permanent change.

Conversations can be a good starting point, but conversations alone rarely influence kids' decisions. Supervision, rules, and consequences do.

4. Setting firm rules—and applying consequences when your child chooses not to comply with the rules—does not make you "cruel" or "unfair."

It makes you an effective teacher, helping your child to learn important lessons about how the world works.

5. Charts are your best friend.

Use [visual charts](#) (link is external) to spell out rules, chores, and expectations, and the consequences for violating them. Have your child use checkmarks or gold stars to mark what's been completed each day. Review your child's chart daily. If something gets missed, ask your child, "What is the consequence for that?" This daily routine encourages your child to develop self-reliance and personal responsibility. (I have seen

marriages saved and chaotic homes turned into peaceful abodes because the parents chose to adopt this organizational system. Seriously: Try it.)

6. Remember that kids are not born rude, defiant, insolent, greedy, selfish, etc.

These are *learned* behaviors, which means they can be unlearned, too. It all starts with you.

7. Remember that it is never too late to make positive changes.

Equip your child with more tools, more life skills, and more lessons. If you are consistent with your efforts—enforcing consequences consistently, for example—you may be surprised by how quickly your child’s behavior improves.

8. Always instigate positive changes by *modeling* the behavior, attitude and values that you wish to see in your child.

Yes, this is essentially a “repeat” of the first truth, but it’s so important, it bears repeating. Be the kind of person that your child can trust, respect, and admire. Be a role model, a teacher, a hero. Your child is counting on you. Watching you. And absorbing what you do.

Dr. Suzanne Gelb is a clinical psychologist, life coach and family law attorney. She believes that it is never too late to become the person you want to be. Strong. Confident. Calm. Creative. Free of all of the burdens that have held you back — no matter what has happened in the past. Her insights on personal growth have been featured on more than 200 radio programs, 200 TV interviews and online at Time, Forbes, Newsweek, The Huffington Post, The Daily Love, MindBodyGreen, and much more.